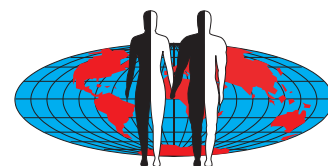


# IMAGINE

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## Capitalism works (for the capitalists)

When socialists argue their case for a better world, they often elicit the response that while socialism may be a good idea, it has never existed and we don't know whether it would be successful or not, but at least we know capitalism works. I couldn't agree more. In fact, capitalism has worked beyond the wildest dreams of the capitalist class. As a system set up to create wealth through the exploitation of the labour of the masses and then concentrate that immense capital in the hands of a tiny minority of owners of production, it has done remarkably well. Today we see corporations that straddle the globe, wealthier than many countries, individuals with so much accumulated capital that mind-boggling statements can be trotted out, such as the top 10 billionaires having a combined income greater than that of the poorest forty-eight countries [1].

But how well can such a system work for the majority? In the rich countries of the world, most workers don't starve and can afford houses, cars, holidays, and the latest electronic equipment. But even here, if we scratch the surface, some alarming statistics are produced—e.g., 37 million unemployed, 100 million (including 31 million Americans) live below the poverty line [2]. In Canada, over 700 000 people, equivalent to the population of our capital city, Ottawa, use food banks on a regular basis, 300 000 in Ontario alone; 3 million Canadians live in “food insecure” households; more than 1 million children live in poverty with its attend-

ant lack of adequate diet and life opportunities; with the increase in non-standard, temporary, part-time, insecure employment and the decrease in unionized, full-time, full-benefit jobs, almost a quarter of Canadian workers earn less than \$10 an hour, virtually guaranteeing poverty [3]. A recent study using 2001 census figures [4] reported that in Toronto, while the top 10% of earners grossed \$261 042, the lowest 10% had to be content with almost 30 times less—\$9 571 per annum. The richest 50% of Canadians own 94.4% of the total wealth, leaving just 5.4% for the poorest 50%. One has to wonder how well the system works for them or, as “flexible” work forces, cut-backs in health, education, and social services become an every-day reality, what the future may hold for the rest of the working class.

If the above figures still leave any doubt in anyone's mind for whom the current system works, a look at world statistics reveals a spectacular and tragic failure to work in the interests of all. For example, 1.3 billion struggle to exist on less than \$1 per day, 3 billion on less than \$2 and 2 billion have no access to electricity [1]; 50 000 people die each day due to poor shelter, poor water supply or poor sanitation; globally, 1 in 5 people do not expect to live beyond 40 years and in the poorest countries, three quarters of the people will not see 50 years [1] and life expectancy has dropped in 33 countries since 1990 [2]. A recent report by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization noted that the number of chroni-

WHAT'S INSIDE	
OBSCENE AND HEARD	2
DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES	3
IN ONTARIO	4
THE TYRRANY OF WORK	6

cally hungry people in the world rose to 842 million in the year 2000 and is growing by 5 million annually.

In an article titled, “Children of the Dump”, the *Cobourg Star* (31 October 2003) described the situation of the poor in Guatemala City. Of 8 million inhabitants, at least one quarter live within the walls of the huge city dump and another quarter live in communities surrounding it. They survive by rummaging through the garbage in search of recyclables and other items to be sold or traded. Apart from the appalling health risks, the dump is very unstable to work on, which necessitates the use of lighter children to do most of the work. This is a scenario that is enacted in many large cities of the southern hemisphere.

If we didn't have the productive powers or the wealth to correct this awful situation, it might be somewhat excusable but, in addition to our aforementioned billionaires, the years 2000 and 2001 saw a 25% increase in the billionaires club and while the richest 20%

see *COMMODITIZATION*, page 9

# Obscene and heard

## Voices in a capitalist world

The Americans, British, and Australians invaded Iraq to disarm a dangerous dictator developing weapons of mass destruction, capable of striking anywhere in the world in forty-five minutes, right? No, neither the inspectors before the war nor the coalition efforts after the war seem to have located any. Then, it was to get those responsible for the 9/11 disaster. No, despite 70% of a misinformed American public believing this to be the case, Saddam Hussein was not involved in that particular attack, according to all rational observers. Then it must have been to fight terrorism. No again, unless we count the war as being the catalyst for attracting terrorists to Iraq to fight the American occupation of a Muslim country after the war. Then it must have been to rid the world of a terrible dictator and establish good old American democ-

racy. Right, so let's listen to what that democracy sounds like.

L. Paul Brenner, civil administrator of Iraq, on free elections for the Iraqi people: "I'm not opposed to it, but I want to do it in a way that takes care of our concerns. Elections that are held too early can be destructive. It's got to be done very carefully. In a post-war situation like this, if you start holding the elections, the people who are rejectionists tend to win. It's often the best organized who win, and the best-organized right now are the former Baathists and, to some extent, the Islamists." (*Toronto Star*, 3 July 2003) Perhaps we should wait until an American-friendly party is the best organized to ensure the correct results!

Max Boot, neo-conservative analyst at the Council on Foreign Relations: "The notion that you can't export democracy through the barrel of a gun is simply wrong. We did it in Germany, Japan, and elsewhere." (*Toronto Star*, 11 May 2003)

Director of the BBC Greg Dyke, on the lack of impartiality of the US media: "Personally, I was shocked while in the United States by how unquestioning the broadcast news media was during the war. If Iraq proved anything, it was that the BBC cannot afford to mix patriotism and journalism. This is happening in the United States and, if it continues, will undermine the credibility of the US electronic news media. We are genuinely shocked when we discover that the largest radio group in the United States was using its airwaves to organize pro-war rallies." (*Toronto Star*, 27 April 2003)

General John Abizaid, new head of US Central Command in Iraq, commenting on soldiers voicing their frustrations on CNN regarding long terms of service

and their criticisms of top American officials including Bush and Rumsfeld: "None of us who wear this uniform are free to say anything disparaging about the Secretary of Defense or the President of the United States. We are not free to do that. It's our professional code." (*Toronto Star*, 17 July 2003). Apparently free to die for freedom but not free to exercise it!

Matt Drudge, commenting on the White House campaign to discredit journalist Jeffrey Koffman, who gave voice to those disgruntled servicemen: "The White House press office is under new management and has become slightly more aggressive about contacting reporters." (*Toronto Star*, 19 July 2003). No freedom for reporters, either!

Bahith Sattar, biology teacher, tribal leader, and mayoral candidate, commenting on the appointment of mayors by American command: "They [Americans] give us a general. First of all an Iraqi general? They lost the last three wars! They're not even good generals. And they know nothing about running a city." (*Toronto Star*, 29 July 2003)

War correspondent Christiane Amanpour, on how CNN was intimidated into acquiescence of the White House war policy by the Bush administration and the Fox News Network: "I think the press was muzzled and I think the press self-muzzled. I'm sorry to say, but certainly television and perhaps, to a certain extent, my station, was intimidated by the administration and its foot soldiers at Fox News. And it did, in fact, put a climate of fear and self-censorship, in my view, in terms of the kind of broadcast work we did." (*Toronto Star*, 16 September 2003)

Tariq Hassan-Gordon, program manager of the Toronto-based Canadian

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The Socialist Party of Canada provides educational material and forums to explain capitalism and socialism, and works to promote working class understanding of socialism. Although primarily active in Canada, the Party sends information to people around the world.

The Socialist Party of Canada was founded in 1905. It is a companion party in an international organization of socialist parties known as the World Socialist Movement, whose Object and Declaration of Principles can be found elsewhere in this issue.

Journalists for Free Expression, commenting on the beating received by a Japanese journalist at the hands of American troops for daring to film the aftermath of a US raid on a private residence in Baghdad: "There have been a lot of examples of journalists being mistreated by American forces and the situation is made worse because the post-Hussein Iraq is not yet a typical democratic process that we would expect in democratic countries. The dangers faced by independent journalists in Iraq are especially high in this situation undoubtedly affects the quality of journalism coming out of the country." (*Toronto Star*, 2 August 2003).

Explaining the seizure of editorial control of the only TV station in Mosul, Iraq, US Army Major-General David Petraeus: "We have every right as an occupying power to stop the broadcast of something that will incite violence. Yes, what we are looking at is censorship but you can censor something that is intended to inflame passions." (*Toronto Star*, 20 May 2003)

George W. Bush, during his Middle Eastern tour: "We must not allow a few people, a few killers, a few terrorists, to destroy the dreams and hopes of the many." (*Toronto Star*, 4 June 2003). No word yet on who he was talking about!

Charles Knight, national security analyst at the Commonwealth Institute, Cambridge, Massachusetts: "Is there democracy outside of four square blocks in Kabul? I don't think so. We now have the least democratic regime in our history and we're going to try to spread it elsewhere? I have great skepticism." (*Toronto Star*, 11 May 2003).

### On justification of one's point of view

The American administration's aggressive stance on the international scene could possibly bring retaliation, even with nuclear weapons. Not to worry! According to Thomas K. Jones, Deputy Undersecretary of Defense in the Reagan administration, "If there are

enough shovels to go around everybody's going to make it." (*Toronto Star*, 11 May 2003). I feel reassured!

Tony Blair justifying the push to globalization: "There is a risk, seen very clearly in parts of the European left, that we end up defining ourselves in economic terms by anti-globalization, and in foreign policy terms by anti-Americanism. Both are cul-de-sacs." (*Toronto Star*, 12 July 2003)

Justifying the administration's lying to the American public about the reasons for the invasion of Iraq, Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz: "Stop and think, if in 2001 or in 2000 or in 1999, we had gone to war in Afghanistan to deal with Osama bin Laden and we had tried to say it's because he's planning to kill 3000 people in New York, people would have said, 'You don't have any proof of that.' I think the lesson of September 11 is that you can't wait until proof after the fact." (*Toronto Star*, 28 July 2003). Stunning logic!

Donald Rumsfeld, US Defense Secretary, when asked why soldiers stood around while looters stripped Baghdad's Museum of Antiquities: "It's an awful lot to ask of young men and women whose lives are at risk, to ask them to go into an area and protect everything in that area it would be nice to protect." (*Toronto Star*, 27 April 2003). Right, let's just stay with the Oil Ministry then.

George Bush talking about the need to protect America from outside threat: "There's no telling how many wars it will take to secure freedom in the homeland." (*Toronto Star*, 7 September 2003)

Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, when asked what he thought about the need to ask Congress for a further \$87 billion to continue the "peace" in Iraq and the fact that the war helped turn a \$230 billion surplus into a \$525 bil-

see **OBSCENE**, page 12

## The Socialist Party of Canada

### Object

The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of society as a whole.

### Declaration of Principles

The Socialist Party of Canada holds:

1. That society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (i.e., land, factories, railways, etc.) by the capitalist or master class, and the consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labour alone wealth is produced.
2. That in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle between those who possess but do not produce and those who produce but do not possess.
3. That this antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into the common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.
4. That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom, the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind, without distinction of race or sex.
5. That this emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.
6. That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organize consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into an agent of emancipation and the overthrow of plutocratic privilege.
7. That as political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interest of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.
8. The Socialist Party of Canada, therefore, enters the field of political action determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labour or avowedly capitalist, and calls upon the members of the working class of this country to support these principles to the end that a termination may be brought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labour, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.



# In Ontario

## How capitalism handled the great crises of 2003

Ontario experienced a series of crises in 2003 which impacted on the economy and provided a lesson in true nature of the capitalist mode of production. Firstly, Canada refused to become a member of the 'coalition of the willing' and join the US in its quest to secure the oilfields of Iraq for its own purposes. The corporate-funded right-wing think tanks and their political arm, the Alliance Party of Canada (recently amalgamated with the Conservative Party), raised a cacophonous chorus of objection and trotted out their poster boy, American ambassador to Canada Paul Cellucci. He proceeded, in a most undiplomatic fashion, to lecture the Canadian government on several occasions on national television about standing by friends in time of need, how the US would be there for Canada, and how the Canadian action could have a detrimental effect on cross-border trade upon which the Canadian economy relies so much. The ambassador neglected to mention how his government not only opposed several Canadian international initiatives such as the moratorium on land mines or the Kyoto agreement, but actively campaigned against them, or how the US has sought to punish Canada frequently under the "Free" Trade Agreement of North America by slapping huge import duties on Canadian goods such as softwood lumber whenever their capitalists felt economically challenged. Some friends! No need to worry, no capitalists have passed up any chances to make money by not trading with us and the sky hasn't fallen in yet.

In the spring, a family returned to Toronto from a visit to Hong Kong and brought the virus known as Sudden Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) with them. A new virus, it was not immediately recognized and those infected were left side by side with

other patients or sent home into the community, causing a hospital emergency that closed hospitals, put medical staff at grave risk, killed 44 people, made another 375 very sick, and quarantined thousands. While the medical community was praised for its selfless devotion to duty, it was clearly playing against a stacked deck. In an effort to privatize health delivery, both federal and provincial governments have chronically underfunded the health system, which left the detection and care of infectious diseases vulnerable and inadequate. Between 1995 and 1999, 25,000 hospital positions were cut by the provincial government. These people are not sitting around doing nothing. They help to make the system work and when they are not there it doesn't function efficiently. The Toronto Medical Officer of Health complained that the ability of the public health system, of hospitals, and of governments to respond to such crises had been severely reduced by cutting health care to the bone. Even though it was his own government that had fired thousands of nurses and paid out millions in severance pay, only to have to rehire them, the Minister of Health, Tony Clement, expressed shock at finding an army of nurses, 50% of the total, who worked at part-time jobs, often at more than one hospital. But it was only when the World Health Organization placed a travel advisory on Toronto that we heard from our political and business leaders. The media were full of stories and figures about how much the economy would suffer and, of course, trotted out the old rubric of how many jobs would be lost, mostly in the tourism and hospitality sector, and finally estimated losses at around \$2 billion. The WHO was painted as the villain, sustained extensive lobbying from the business interests and caved in by lifting the ban after just eight days. This left Toronto with a huge image prob-

lem which would be sure to affect the chink of cash registers in the future. What to do? A huge SARS benefit concert was arranged to show the world that Toronto was "open for business". (How that phrase makes me cringe after eight years of the Tories' "Common Sense Revolution"!)

That the organizers chose the Rolling Stones to headline the concert and save the city is a cause of some amusement after the group had been vilified for their drugs, sex, and rock and roll attitude by the city's leaders when they first arrived here thirty years ago. To be sure there was plenty of hype, newspaper headlines screamed, "We Rocked—450,000 Party puts Toronto back on the World Map" (*Toronto Star*). A commentator at the event shouted excitedly, "We're open for business—come here and spend money!" Not too many people were fooled by this thinly veiled attempt to boost business while ignoring the real issues of the health sector. Letters to the editor at the *Toronto Star* were typical: "[The SARS concert] was intended to benefit this provincial government's main constituency, the boys of the business community, who have been hit in the wallet by the outbreak." And "...all the lack of funding and the tremendous costs to the health care system (\$1 billion) will not be changed one iota by the Stones concert. They're coming to boost the tourism and hospitality industry." Surely in a sane society, one not based on money and profit, we would have said right from the beginning, "Don't come here; we have a problem and we want to fix it, not risk spreading it around the world." Surely in a sane society we would have precautions for recognizing and reacting to infectious diseases in place, and those who were no longer required in the tourist industry could contribute in other areas until required again rather than losing their means of living.

August saw the great North American blackout which cut power to over 50 million people in the North Eastern US and Ontario. Two things are notable. First, it seems that once again privatization of services was a strong factor. The transmission system is described as old and in need of serious money to meet today's demands. When this money must come from profits, it will be the absolute minimum and thus infrastructure usually lags behind needs. When it comes from public funds (taxes) this also comes from profits, with the same results. The initial enquiries fingered a private energy company in Ohio, FirstEnergy, whose lines began to go down early in

registers down, capitalism was suspended. Many people simply pitched in with directing traffic at intersections, helping the workers at the few gas stations with backup generators, and bus drivers extending their shifts and waiving the fares to provide needed service, all working for free. Meanwhile comments from the general population included, "What a beautiful night we had last night. Our family gathered together and had dinner outside. With the TV and computers down the kids were also with us. We all played a board game with the help of candles and a million stars. Maybe if we are lucky the power will still be out tonight." And, "Despite the amount of holidays and

In September a tainted meat scandal came to light when a meat processing plant in the province was found to have been using dead and sick animals. This came after mad cow disease had been discovered in Alberta, impacting economically on the Canadian meat industry. This brought a flurry of photo-ops for politicians to be seen eating at barbecues and declaring meat safe to eat (read: buy). On further investigation it was obvious that the inspection system was quite inadequate for the task at hand, allowing at least one unscrupulous plant to take advantage and put the public's health at risk. In its zeal to present a balanced budget and hand more tax cuts back to the already-wealthy, the provincial government had, as in so many other areas, slashed funding for the inspection of meat, reducing 100 inspectors to just ten full-time contract employees, and relied on part time inspectors or downloading to the municipalities to fill in the void. Once again, the insanity of running an economic and social system solely to accumulate capital is quite obvious. In the case of mad cow disease we should have been saying, "Yes, we have a problem, and all beef deliveries will be stopped until we are certain all is safe." Why is our industry still using feed made from animals anyway after the recent experience in Britain? Obviously, that type of feed is cheaper and inflates profits, public health be damned! In the case of Ontario's tainted meat, if there were no money involved, it simply wouldn't be worth cheating the system. There would be no gain. All of these catastrophes could have been avoided or minimized if sane people in a sane system were charged with looking after the public good. In capitalism, those charged with this task, no matter whether it is businessmen, politicians, or workers with the appropriate skills, no matter whether they are working in a for-profit enterprise or a non-profit enterprise, can only operate in an insane system that must attend to the economic consequences before the human consequences.

—J. AYERS

“ While the medical community was praised for its selfless devotion to duty during the SARS crisis, it was clearly playing against a stacked deck. ”

the day, but the company neglected to warn other suppliers so the problem could be isolated. Apparently the company had been judged responsible for a recent blackout in the New Jersey area and thus were required by law to forego their next price increase, a situation to be avoided at all costs. FirstEnergy is also reported to be a company that neglects infrastructure in the interests of higher profits (no surprise there, what company doesn't!) and drew a scathing remark from senator Edward Markey (D-Mass) while addressing a Congressional Committee: "From what I can tell, FirstEnergy should not have a licence to drive a car let alone nuclear power plants." The second notable factor is what happened when the energy supply died and, with the cash

vacations that we are given from work, it takes a massive shut-down for us to just plain do nothing. I spent the night talking to my family face-to-face, and I had nowhere else to be." And, "Not wanting to be alone in a dark and empty house, I knocked on the door of my neighbours to see if they would mind if I hung out with them. They decided to come over to my house with all kinds of steaks and barbecue-type foods that would have been wasted in their fridge. We had a great, relaxing gathering out on my deck, and an opportunity for the first time I remember to see a beautiful sky full of stars over Toronto." (*Toronto Star*) Just a small glimpse of what life could be like without the madhouse chase to earn a living and consume at all costs!

# Book review

## Was there ever a time in which work was satisfying and pleasurable?

*The Tyranny of Work: Alienation and the Labour Process* by Paul Rinehart, Harcourt Brace & Company, Canada, 1996.

The purpose of the book is to reveal the manner in which the nature and organization of work have adversely affected the Canadian people since pre-industrial times. Rinehart begins his examination of work under capitalism by identifying it as a social problem. Work plays such a central role in our lives and yet has brought continuing protests from workers to protect themselves from industrial excesses such as child labour, long hours, low pay and injurious working conditions. These struggles, especially spectacular ones such as the Winnipeg General Strike, were viewed by the authorities as a problem of workers' responses to work, never of the nature of work itself. Rinehart asks, "What has happened to make an important, necessary, and potentially pleasurable social activity which is capable of satisfying both material and psychological human needs into a source of strife, resentment, and boredom?"

At the root of the problem is the alienation of the worker—i.e., estrangement of the worker from the product; alienation from decisions regarding the work; organizational estrangement from the meaning and purpose of work; estrangement from the expression of human qualities such as conceptualization and planning; and deterioration of human relationships, both between workers and between workers and capitalists, through the creation of dominant and subordinate positions in the workplace. The sources of alienation, Rinehart writes, are the fact that the means of production is in the hands of a small minority, thus excluding the majority from decision making and so creating an exploitive relationship; the markets in land, labour-power, and commodities being under the domain

of prices and profits and taking preference over human conditions; and the division of labour, creating specialization and boring, mindless, repetitive jobs. This picture is contrasted with pre-industrial work that was varied, communal, and family-related, and often indistinguishable from play, sociability and leisure. Rinehart rejects technology itself as a cause of alienation, rightly recognizing that the primary causes are to be found in the social relations of production: "Under capitalism, the development and selection of technology are guided not only by the goals of productivity and profitability, but also by employers' and managers' determination to minimize workers' control over the labour process."

Rinehart describes the rise of industrial capitalism in Canada, which arrived late but followed familiar developmental patterns as the mercantile class gained hegemony and capital wealth from land and lucrative terms of credit, that bankrupted farmers and put land out of the reach of immigrants, supplying a ready workforce for capitalist enterprises, and thus paving the way for the establishment of the factory system in Montreal, Toronto, and Hamilton in the late nineteenth century. The small, self-sufficient villages were transformed by the replacement of craftsmen by machines, the movement of production to large centers and the conscription of women and children to cheapen labour. Discipline was applied, of course, to force the workers to labour ever harder to produce greater amounts of surplus value. Rinehart cites Paul Mantou, in *The Industrial Revolution in the Eighteenth Century*: "Hard and fast rules replaced the freedom of the small workshops. Work started, meals were eaten and work stopped at fixed hours, notified by the ringing of a bell. Within the factory each had his allotted place and

his strictly defined and invariable duty. Everyone had to work steadily and without stopping, under the vigilant eye of a foreman who secured obedience by means of fines or dismissals, and sometimes by more brutal forms of coercion."

Rinehart recounts the workers reactions to the factory system pointing out that besides the known reported protest movements such as the formation of trade unions and their actions, more subtle and less reported forms were prevalent, as detailed in the 1889 Royal Commission, such as spontaneous walk-outs, work stoppages, restrictions of output, industrial sabotage, and absenteeism. The author writes, "Wherever it has arisen, industrial capitalism and its work requirements have clashed with the pre-industrial cultural values and practices." The Fourth Convention of the Canadian Labour Union, 1876, even passed a resolution calling for co-operative ownership of industry in their search for an egalitarian alternative to capitalism. Strikes and strife have continued up to the present day and have, in fact, been expanded from the factory to include clerical and public service workers. Rinehart correctly analyses in his notes to this section (#158) that far from removing the especially antagonistic practices of the globalization of capital and liberalization of trade that has occurred in the last quarter century, so-called worker-friendly parties such as the New Democratic Party and the Liberal Party have simply continued the same trends. This, of course, fits in with the socialist view that all parties are capitalist in nature and every four years compete among themselves to run the capitalist system for the capitalists.

Rinehart looks extensively at the gradual change from manufacture to white-collar, knowledge-based, service and technology sectors.



Like Harry Braverman in *Monopoly Capital* (see *Imagine* 2(1)), he concludes that these jobs have been subjected, like the factory jobs, to the capitalist mode of production and thus degraded, and that the emphasis on training and education far outstrips its need. For example, in 1986, 41% of undergraduates, 62% with masters degrees, and 35% with PhDs held jobs that did not require a university education. Far from needing the workers to pull up their socks to be even more competitive, Rinehart writes, "Canada's problem is not a shortage of good workers, but a lack of good jobs." Socialists would interject that Canada's problem is the employment system itself. Rinehart notes the rationalization of white-collar jobs, such as sales clerks, who have become mere movers of material as small stores with product-knowledgeable clerks give way to the big box stores staffed with minimum wage assistants. Even the skilled professional, technological and scientific workers are subject to strict control and limited to working on projects that will turn a profit. For example, scientists employed by a large multinational firm were told, after developing a technique of making fertilizer that could substantially increase rice production, to concentrate instead on lawn fertilizer. Obviously, the buying power of the American public to have green lawns far outweighed the needs of impoverished Third World farmers.

While it is true that some professionals move up the corporate ladder, closer to the levers of control, they generally leave their skills behind them: "The engineer who, at forty, can still use a slide rule or logarithmic table, and make a true drawing, is a failure."

The public sector, which doubled as a percentage of the Canadian workforce to 20% during 1941–70, while viewed as plodding unimaginative and inefficient, in reality, follows the private organizations, using the same values and practices. This is hardly surprising, Rinehart points out, because there is widespread interchange of top personnel between the two systems and close personal ties among top executives

moving in the same business and social circles. Rinehart confirms the socialist view of government as the legislative arm of capitalism: "Owners and executives of big business are active in both the state and private systems, and the alliance between the two sectors is dominated by the interests of corporate capitalism."

Rinehart argues that although labour force developments are complex, the position taken by some post-industrialist theorists that science and technology are transforming the social relations of production and class structure is largely a false position considering the increase in minimum-skill jobs and the continuation of the class struggle through increased union action of white collar workers in recent decades: "Given that employers determine the implementations and purposes of technology its overall effect, in conjunction with modes of work rationalization, is not the creation of knowledge workers but the displacement of workers, the removal of their skills, and the transfer of their discretion and control over the labour process to management."

In his section on blue-collar employment, Rinehart notes the factors that continue to alienate the worker and challenges the popular media stereotype of the affluent trade union member who could care less about the nature, skill, or control of labour. In reality, the increase in real family incomes for workers slowed in the seventies, stagnated in the eighties, and declined in the nineties. In London, Ontario, for example, in 1992, a family of four would have needed \$36338 to meet basic needs, while the average male worker earned \$31696, necessitating two incomes to achieve this end. The jobless rate varied between 5.7% and 11.3% in those decades, but Rinehart points out that if discouraged (no longer seeking employment) workers were counted, it would have been as high as 15.7% in 1991 and double that if underemployed were counted. The division and degradation of labour has continued its profit-oriented course and

extended into more occupations such as printing, mining, trucking, longshoremen, and railroading. Rinehart asks us to consider the following job description from a typical blue-collar worker at a food processing plant: "Basically, I stand there all day and slash the necks of chickens. You make one slash up on the skin of the neck and then you cut around the base of the neck so the next person beside you can crop it...The chickens go in front of you on the line and you do every other chicken or whatever. And you stand there for eight hours in one spot and do it." Rinehart describes many more jobs like this and some who enjoy their work such as a toolmaker and a piano tuner—notably, those with some control, variety, and creativity.

New technology is increasingly used to set up surveillance of workers by monitoring the speed and output of machinery, the movement of trucks and the routes of meter readers—in short, not to free the worker but to tie him more securely to his task. Discipline is an ever-present component of the drive to increase productivity. "The capitalist workplace is characterized by relations of subordination and domination, and manual workers occupy the subordinate positions," notes Rinehart. In the service industry, the fastest-growing job sector, jobs are characterized by low pay, low security, and little training, and are occupied mainly by women and teenagers. The physical environment frequently exposes the worker to unsafe and harmful conditions resulting in 4000 injuries per day and 1000 deaths annually (1968–1978), and a myriad of life-long diseases, including cancer, emphysema, black lung, and asbestosis: "General statistics on the magnitude of workplace health and safety problems and recent events in industries such as meat packing and mining tragically reveal that the interests of employers and employees are far from identical on this matter." All of these factors have ensured a continuation of the class war manifested by strikes, legal and wildcat; quota restrictions; gold bricking; slowdowns and

working to rule; indifference; sabotage; and production games to belittle management and put the workers in control. Rinehart sums up, "In their pursuit of profits, employers and managers subjugate workers, speed up and routinize work, implement labour-replacing machinery and keep wages as low as possible—actions inviting resentment and resistance from workers. By contrast, involvement in the production of useful goods and services creates among workers a concern for the quality of their output and their work performance."

In his concluding chapter, Rinehart examines solutions to alienation. He notes that, contrary to former systems, the capitalist system has created a sharp division between work and leisure. A full and creative leisure life might decrease the effects of alienation but, unfortunately, leisure is a small percentage of total time for the worker and with the modern pace and expectations of business and close surveillance via such devices as cell phones and laptop computers, it is essentially much less than previously experienced for many sectors of the economy. Automation could be a source of freeing the worker from menial tasks—e.g., in 1980, it took ten to twenty man-hours to produce one ton of steel; in 1990, just five man hours were required for the same task. In 1980, a metal shop did \$5 million in business with fourteen skilled men; in 1990, the same shop did \$25 million in business with thirteen skilled men. But as Rinehart observes, "Unfortunately, the liberatory potential of technology is limited, since its development and implementation are controlled and its purpose defined by persons and institutions with vast resources of capital and power." Indeed, in the greatest

period of automation, from the 1960s to the present, we have seen virtually no reduction in the hours and little advance in real wages of workers. Since 1948, US workers' productivity has doubled—i.e., they could be working half the time for the same standard of living, but, in fact, they were working 163 hours more per annum, on average, by 1987!

In this section Rinehart also examines initiatives by management to ameliorate the lot of the worker. Various human relations and quality of life programmes, such as participatory management, job redesign (despecialization and rotation), and Japanese lean production, all supposedly to create more interesting jobs. For example, Rinehart

“ Since 1948, workers' productivity has doubled. We could be working half the time for the same standard of living, but in fact by 1987 we were working 163 hours more each year. ”

describes the Uddvalla Volvo plant in Sweden where assembly lines were foregone in favour of assembly islands where four people assembled the whole car. Although the plant eventually matched traditional methods and was more flexible and therefore more conducive to model changes, it was the first plant closed when Volvo sales declined in 1993. Rinehart found that all these schemes were designed not to humanize work, but to intensify labour, lessen labour costs, meet production emergencies, or to turn resistant workers and adversarial unions into willing collaborators with management and its policies: "...this retreat from the precepts of Fordism and Taylorism is undertaken by management for management's purpose."

Rinehart then moves to workers' control of production and cites the examples of the Paris Commune (1871), the Russian revolutions (1905 and 1917), Italian and German factory occupations (1918–1920), Spain (1936), Japan (1946), and Poland (1981). In Spain, Rinehart writes, there were masses of urban and rural labourers who had transformed social and economic conditions. Seventeen hundred villages and three million people were involved in collective forms of agriculture and workers' committees controlled entire towns. Barcelona and its province, Catalan, were a large industrial collective sporting signs that read "*incaultado*", or placed under workers' control. Rinehart cites Noam Chomsky's observation that the move-

ment in Spain was largely a spontaneous one without a revolutionary vanguard. Eventually these enterprises were forced to a standstill because credit and necessary supplies were withheld, not by Franco, but by the Republican forces. These

examples and many more modern ones, such as the vast Basque Mondragon cooperative prove that workers can and do run production of goods successfully, without any help from the capitalists. Rinehart observes that the market (the capitalist mode of production) is the barrier to worker control and sees the only genuine solution to alienation as a total restructuring of the workplace, the economy, and the state, and the establishment of a collective mode of production, a democratically planned economy, and worker-managed enterprises.

Finally, in the last sentence, Rinehart echoes socialist sentiments: "Only when working people take up the struggle on a massive basis will the full

see TYRRANY, page 12



# The commoditization of food

*continued from page 1*

consume 80% of all goods and services, the poorest 20% make do with a meager 1%. In other words, we have the resources to redress the wrongs, perhaps even the will, but we have a system that must concentrate capital in an enterprise to make it competitive and giving wealth away would make corporate survival in a competitive capitalist world impossible.

In spite of the above picture, you would think that any system would at least be successful at providing the absolute human necessity of food to everyone. All societies in history have been able to produce or find adequate food; otherwise they would not have existed. Of course, there were famines and people died of starvation, but these were mostly due to natural causes such as weather or pests. Food shortages were usually shared among the whole community. Today, in contrast, we have millions dying annually of food deprivation and we continually hear about desperate situations such as the 15 million people who faced starvation in Southern Africa at the start of 2003. Yet we are quite capable of, and generally do, produce enough food to feed everybody. It is estimated that 80% of countries where people are starving export food. Wealthy people in those countries have no problem buying food. In the affluent countries, we pay farmers billions of dollars *not* to produce food and frequently hoard commodities like grain to create an artificial shortage to keep the price and profits up. In other words, we have starvation amid plenty. The cause is not shortage of food, but an abundance of poverty. This is a recent phenomenon in human history but fits right in with the property rights and capital accumulation of our economic system.

Even the rich countries don't entirely escape this problem. Apart from the deficient diets of those living below the poverty line or those earning minimum wage, we have the large

numbers resorting to food banks, as noted above, a figure which keeps on growing and stretching the volunteers' ability to meet rising demand. In Greater Toronto, food bank use has increased 40% since 1995 to 160 000 people; over 50 000 of them are children [5].

What is going on that has created this great disconnect between producer and consumer? At the beginning of capitalism, food was used as a coercive instrument in persuading the dislocated peasants to move from the countryside to the developing factory towns. They were housed in tiny row houses with a ten foot by eight foot concrete backyard. As well as being efficient housing from the capitalists' point of view, it prevented these skilled market gardeners from producing their own food. Hence they were forced to show up at the factory on a daily basis whereas, with a plot of land, they might have thumbed their noses at the employers. Food then became a commodity and became subject to the same market forces as all other widgets—*i.e.*, mechanization, productivity, labour and product degradation, ever-greater rates of exploitation of labour.

What we are experiencing today is simply the natural extension of this continual process. Just as skilled, independent artisans and tradesmen were put out of business by the factory system, so too are independent farmers being pushed off their land to make way for industrial agriculture. In the US, small farms have declined from 6.8 million in 1928 to 1.6 million today [6]; the six founding nations of Europe's common agricultural policy had 22 million farmers in 1957, but just 7 million today; Canada lost three-quarters of its farmers between 1941 and 1996; China has an estimated 400 million endangered farmers [7]; in Missouri, hog production has doubled but the number

of farmers cut in half; the introduction of massive hog farms in Huron county, Ontario has brought the pig population to 594 250 (174.8 per square kilometer) while the human population is 58 000 (17.1 per square kilometer). The waste run-off from these operations has resulted in *E. coli* contamination of up to 100 times safe levels in surrounding streams and the permanent closure of beaches on Lake Huron.

The natural trend of capitalism to concentrate capital in ever-larger enterprises has brought food decisions into the realm of the corporate boardroom. The bottom line is about profit maximization and has little to do with dietary, environmental or sustainable farming considerations. Industrial farming is characterized by large-scale factory operations, confinement and concentration of animals, lagoon storage of animal wastes which frequently leak into local ground water systems, spreading or spraying of manure on open fields, monoculture and high chemical use in crops, genetically modified foods, irradiation, food alteration and dilution, and vast transportation systems to send products thousands of kilometres to huge supermarket chains. In addition, these large enterprises have been able, through bribery tactics such as large political contributions, spending huge amounts on lobbying and the collusion of their partners, the state governments, to win massive concessions in the form of subsidies and favourable trade legislation. For example, the 2002 US farm bill gave \$248 billion to large farming corporations, and the richest 20% of farmers in the European Union pull in 80% of the subsidies. Total agricultural subsidies in the rich countries exceed \$300 billion per annum [7]. Small farmers can no longer compete. In Canada, since 1988, agricultural exports have tripled but net farm income has dropped 24%, farm debt has doubled, 16% have been forced off their land, and the number of inde-

pendent hog farmers has dropped 66% [6]. In recent decades, world trade agreements have liberalized trade rules allowing organizations such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund to use loan repayments to force poor countries in the Southern Hemisphere to open their markets to cheap, subsidized food from the north, closing local farms and forcing a reliance on foreign food. At the same time these rich countries have maintained their own tariffs and subsidies. In Jamaica in 1992, for example, local dairy farmers produced 25% of milk consumed in that country. World Bank liberalization policies required the elimination of tariffs on imported dairy products. Within one year, millions of dollars worth of milk had to be destroyed, hundreds of cows slaughtered and many dairy farms closed as cheap, subsidized milk powder flooded in [7]. The \$3.9 billion US subsidy to 25000 cotton farmers was greater than the entire GDP of Burkina Faso where 2 million unlucky farmers relied on cotton for a livelihood.

As is usual in the capitalist mode of production, no stone is unturned in the search for greater productivity and cost cutting to increase profits. This has resulted in some questionable but financially successful tactics. In meat production, the feeding of processed blood/bone meal and animal parts spreads viruses and diseases including mad cow disease; antibiotic use, 80% of which is for non-essential use, has resulted in an increase of new strains of resistant bacteria; force-feeding of cows of grain rations prior to slaughter to increase weight has, in some cases, resulted in *E. coli* contamination soaring to 300%; the practice of dunking chicken carcasses into fetal soups to increase market weight leads to bacterial outbreaks; advanced meat recovery techniques—scraping everything including nerves, cartilage, and ligaments—produces low grade meat for fast food outlets [8].

In another recent technological development, genetically modified

foods, genes of a plant are altered by injecting genetic material from another species into the plant to make it resistant to specific herbicides or pesticides. Producers claim it will enhance present yields to the point where we will be able to feed the hungry of the world. As noted above, however, we are quite capable of doing that with current food technology and distribution practices. Action Aid, an international development agency in its report, "Going Against the Grain" [9], says that GM foods are risky technology with no track record of alleviating hunger and may actually worsen the situation. Only 1% of GM research is aimed at poor farmers in developing countries and the report concluded, after studying nine million farmers on four continents, that "it's not the interests of poor farmers but the profits of the agro-chemical industry that have been the driving force behind the emergence of GM agriculture." The Independent Panel on GM, a newly formed group of leading international scientists, has called for a ban on GM crops in favour of sustainable agriculture after GM crop failures in India reached as high as 100%. On the Canadian prairies, Monsanto, a leader in the GM field, promised farmers using their product higher yields, little or no cross contamination, and a benign impact on the environment, but what they got was lower yields due to wider contamination, damage to wildlife support systems, and super weeds that required increased pesticide use. In addition, organic canola was wiped out by cross contamination of Monsanto's Roundup Ready GM canola, and in at least one case, the company took the organic farmer to court for using their product without permission even though his seed supplier could not guarantee the supply to be free from contamination.[10]. In a study covering three states by US scientists, it was found that modified sunflowers spread their properties to the wild variety and that transgenes could transform weeds into superweeds—i.e., those which are not controllable [11]. Paul Brown, environmental correspondent for *The Guard-*

*ian*, reported that a British study in eight counties and nine other sites showed that seeds sown in these GM trials had been contaminated with antibiotic genes undetected by government inspectors who simply accepted the word of the offending company, Adventis, and that animal or human consumers could develop an immunity to common life-saving drugs [12]. The *New Internationalist* magazine confirmed this by citing an article by University of California researchers in *Nature* magazine who stated that modified DNA in GM foods can recombine in the stomach during consumption transferring the properties of the modified plants. This could render medicine ineffective. The Institute of Science in Society reported that the 550 million acres planted with GM corn, soybeans, and cotton between 1996 and 2003 increased pesticide use by fifty million pounds. A study by the University of Manitoba, commissioned by the Canadian Wheat Board stated that Monsanto's Roundup Ready wheat posed an "unacceptable risk" to the environment [14].

This all points to an industry that has developed new techniques which with time and patient research may help mankind in the future. Unfortunately, those in charge of its development and use, in the interests of making fast and huge returns on investment, have rushed products to market that are unstable, uncontrollable, exacerbate old problems and bring a host of new ones, and could be downright dangerous to consumers.

This scenario contrasts with sustainable organic farming where skills learned over centuries are applied to produce smaller units growing a variety of crops, using less soil-compacting machinery, reduced tillage, crop rotation, fallowing, mulching, recycling of organic wastes, and avoidance of chemicals. Animals roam in more natural environments eating natural foods and only use antibiotics only when necessary. It is more labour-intensive for actual food production but, as it can be practiced anywhere, it can save the huge costs and labour of transporta-

tion and building of machinery. Various studies have proven the superiority of organic farming. Jules Petty of the University of Essex, in a study of organic farming in 52 developing countries, found organic farms increased yield by an average 73%, and increases of 200–1000% have been attained. Saskatchewan farmers discovered that by substituting a variety of biological and cultural practices, they could reduce chemical inputs by 20–60% [13]; small organic farms can generate revenue of \$1902.50 per acre compared to \$21.40 for large farms [6]. Not surprisingly, this type of food production creates more nutrition, uses less chemical inputs, supports soil health, nurtures diverse wildlife and prevents water supply contamination. Organic vegetables contain more vitamins, minerals, enzymes and other nutrients than commercially grown crops. Megafarm fruits and vegetables, on the other hand, contain less nutrients than they did 50 years ago. For example, broccoli now has 62% less calcium, 33% less iron, 55% less vitamin A, and 40% less thiamin [6]. Organic turkeys, in contrast to those commercially reared, receive no antibiotics, hormones, or GM feed, and are field-grazed on pesticide-free grassland, producing birds that contain half the fat and cholesterol and have a higher protein content. One might wonder why this form of agriculture does not replace industrial farming were it not for a knowledge of the profit system.

**A**s modern food production moves further away from markets and more to the cheaper, less regulated Southern hemisphere, better preservation techniques are required. One such technique is irradiation, where food trays are moved through chambers with six-foot thick walls and exposed to high-energy gamma rays from dripping pencils of nuclear waste products such as cobalt 60 and cesium 137. Leaking canisters pose a threat to food and workers. The big player in this process is Sure-Beam, a division of American defense contractor Titan corporation, aided and abet-

ted by the nuclear industry eager to find a market for its waste products. An “e-beam” from a particle accelerator may be used but only penetrates 1½” and no method is 100% successful in killing microbes. Irradiation ruptures numerous chemical bonds, leaving free radicals, ions, and other radiolytic byproducts dangerous to human health such as formaldehyde, octane, formic acid, butane, methyl propane, and benzene, and others found only in irradiated food. Nutrition is destroyed leaving vitamins, enzymes, healthy bacteria, and essential fatty acids seriously depleted—e.g., losses of up to 80% of vitamin A in eggs, 91% of vitamin B-6 in beef, 50% of vitamin A in carrot juice, 37% of vitamin B-1 in oats, and 30% of vitamin C in potatoes [8]. Once again, a technique that fits the convenience of large scale, profit-motivated farming corporations, but not the nutritional needs of the consumer, is put into practice without the consent of the latter.

**W**hat we have ended up with today, then, is an industry essential to human existence that has the ability to richly feed everyone on earth but, following the capitalists’ mantra, “can’t pay, can’t have”, millions experience food deprivation due to the nature of the system. Following the capitalist mode of production, the food industry has developed techniques that result in higher profits for the food giants while forcing smaller farmers out of business. The level of monopoly capitalism is illustrated by the fact that just four US companies, linked into two alliances, Cargill/Monsanto and Novartis/ADM, control 80% of the world seed market; six corporations handle 85% of the world grain trade and fifteen corporations control 85–90% of world coffee sales. Large scale monoculture techniques have resulted in a staggering loss of diversity, the bedrock of the natural biological world, to the extent that today less than 30 crops produce 80% of the world’s food supply; 75% of the genetic diversity of agricultural crops has been lost since 1900; Mexico has lost 80% of

its corn varieties since 1930, and China lost 90% of its wheat and rice varieties in 20 years [15]. These figures can only be matched by the nutrient loss in our foods that has spawned massive vitamin, mineral supplement, and drug industries. The dilution of quality, the substitution of processed, additive-rich, and sugar-rich foods has resulted in unprecedented obesity levels stimulating diet and exercise industries. I suppose from the capitalist point of view, this is good business, more opportunities to invest capital and exploit more wage earners, and as these giant capitalist enterprises move into health care, degraded food is creating more customers for them in the health system. In the US, obesity rates have tripled since 1980, two-thirds of the population are overweight and 300 000 die of obesity every year. At current rates, it is estimated that three-quarters of Britons will be obese within 15 years. Because obesity occurs among poor populations, it can be concluded that it is not a disease of affluence, but rather one of diet.

The marketing arm of capitalism has exacerbated the problem with the “supermarketization” of food sales that rely on the profitable pre-cooked meats and processed, convenience foods that contain lots of sugars. In Brazil, the share of food sales by supermarkets went from 30% to 75% in the 1990s, China went from 0 to 600 supermarkets in six years, and in Mexico, Wal-Mart commands one third of all household expenditure [15]. This process has completed the control, by a few giant corporations, of the food chain from seeds to production to chemical inputs, to sales to the consumer. It has rendered eating natural healthy foods almost impossible. If they are obtainable at all, they are often too expensive for the average consumer.

A recent radio report cited a poverty action group that bought healthy food for one month and determined the cost for a family of four to eat properly to be \$600. For that quarter of the Canadian population that earns \$10 per hour or less, this would leave a maxi-



mum of \$1000 for all other expenditures including rent, clothing, and transportation—an impossible task. With probably another quarter that is only slightly better off, perhaps half of the Canadian population is condemned to cheap, processed, and diluted fast foods for the majority of their diet. No wonder our health care system is overburdened!

The commoditization of food for the purpose of accumulating capital wealth has obviously been very successful for the investors, but continues to be a tragic disaster for mankind.

—J. AYERS

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## Obscene and heard

*continued from page 3*

lion deficit in three years: "Look, I'm not in the budget business. The president has announced a number. I work for the president. If you want to know what I think of his number, I like it." (*Toronto Star*, 14 September 2003)

Henry Ford, defending the establishment of boring, repetitive jobs on his assembly line: "The average worker, I'm sorry to say, wants a job in which he does not have to put forth much physical exertion—above all, he wants a job in which he does not have to think." (Rinehart, *The Tyranny of Work*)

Colin Powell, squirming like a stranded earthworm, returning, cap in hand, to the "irrelevant" UN to ask it to put forth a major commitment and play second fiddle to USA in "rebuilding" (pillaging) Iraq: "There are many roles to be played. And we believe every peace-loving nation in the world, every nation that would like to see a more stable Middle East, that would like to see democracy arise in that part of the world, would want to play a role. Whether one might call it dominant or not dominant, it's important for us to come together as an international community, and this is a further step." (*Toronto Star*, 14 September 2003)

### On health

Toronto Mayor, Mel Lastman, complaining in a CNN interview about the imposition of a travel advisory on Toronto by the World Health Organization, the 55-year-old body charged with guarding the world's health: "Who are

these guys anyway? I've never even heard of them."

Letter to Editor: "SARS and politics are a bad mix. SARS is clearly demonstrating that our political and economic goals far outweigh the primary goal of protecting our citizens from disease. Where were Jean Chrétien [PM] and Ernie Eves [Ontario Premier] and Mel Lastman before the WHO declared its travel advisory? Only when it became clear that the Canadian economy was about to take a serious hit did they become visible." (*Toronto Star*, 27 April 2003)

In an article in the *Toronto Star* (25 August 2003), writer Rick Westhead: "Even though it affects as many as 300 million people a year and kills one million, for decades malaria has been ignored by the pharmaceutical industry because companies make more money developing drugs to sell to affluent patients."

### On starvation

In the US congress debate over the G-7 initiative to provide debt relief to forty poor countries, legislators depicted the IMF (International Monetary Fund) as the agency responsible for that debt crisis and Representative Maxine Waters commented, "Do we have to have the IMF involved at all? Because as we have painfully discovered, the way the IMF works causes children to starve."

### On the blackout

As the power flickered back on after the great North American Blackout, the huge neon advertising billboards sucked electricity out of the faltering grid and prompted an enraged Mayor Mel Lastman to hit at the very bedrock of capitalist production—advertising—screaming, "Turn them off. They're not necessary. They're not important." Well said, Mel.

### On the environment

After a particularly smoggy period in Southern Ontario, environment minister Jim Wilson attempted to deflect blame from the real culprits, unregulated capitalist producers, onto the public: "Clearly, anything they [the public] can do to cut down their use of equipment or barbecues that produce smog would help." The Ontario Clean Air Alliance noted that the government's coal-fired generating plant, Canada's top polluter, produced 7.5 million kilograms of pollutants annually, an SUV produces 10 kg, while barbecue pollution is so trivial, it's never been quantified.

—EDITORS

## **Tyrrany** *continued from page 8*

development of our personal and social lives become possible." Although there are many aspects of the socialist case that Rinehart does not touch upon, such as the end of states, money, wage labour, *etc.*, he is on the right track on his topic, the alienation of the worker, its consequences, and solutions.

—J. AYERS